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MRS. HORACE SMITH.

R E M A R K S

AT THE

F U N E R A L

OF

MRS. HORACE SMITH,

IN THE

FLORENCE STREET M. E. CHURCH,


SPRINGFIELD, MASS., FEBRUARY 23, 1872.

BY

REV. C. D. HILLS, PASTOR.



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R E M A R K S

AT THE FUNERAL OF MRS. ELIZA SMITH, WIFE OF HORACE SMITH,
SPRINGFIELD, MASS.,

BY REV. C. D. HILLS.

HE pilgrimage of another mortal is ended. That of another immortal has begun. The crossing from the seen to the unseen was alone. We have heard the good-bye of a mother in Israel, and she is gone to the land where only welcomes are heard.

The dead is living still. The soul, free from the broken, deranged body, must have far more activity and bliss than when the slave of flesh.

They have no Bible in the spirit-land, but the Bible we have in this land of flesh and blood throws its blessed light "over there," and we can see the precious saints of God, conscious and happy in their

prepared home. When the ship bearing our loved ones swings away from her moorings, moving out beyond the reach of waving farewells, and is lost to sight, who would say that she sails no longer, or that there is no shore on the other side where to disembark?

After "the silver cord is loosed and the golden bowl is broken," then we must consign the body to its "mother earth," but the spirit rises to its inspiring God, a rational and moral personality, awaiting his righteous disposal, and in the simple entity of its being lives on, to the resurrection. Aside from revelation, we have a right to assume the probable continuance of the powers of thought, feeling, action and consciousness after death, until the contrary is proved. Their discontinuance can not be proved. If there were no mental phenomena and I should say they will begin at death, the proof would be demanded of me; but, as these phenomena continue until death, the assumption that they go beyond is well founded, and that they do not is not for the believer in the Bible to prove. Since all we know of the nature and power of death is its effects, and, since our positive knowledge of the nature and vital powers of the soul is still more limited, it is possible, as

we trace these activities of the soul up to death, that with additional faculties we might go beyond and find them greater still. The continued existence of man has been the universal sentiment of all nations. Poesy, art and philosophy have embodied the idea of a future life. Man is an inexplicable enigma, unless he outlives mortality. Even conscience protests against the suspension of the soul's powers after death.

It is blessed to rise above all doubtful whisperings of philosophy and unbelief, and be led by our truthful, friendly Bible beyond all uncertainties into heaven's blessed realities. We stand this side of the silent future, and ask deep, earnest questions concerning it. Back through the Bible come satisfactory answers to bless us when we need.

An excellent Christian woman was found dead, with her head bowed upon the Bible opened at the blessed words: "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Her earth-wearied spirit found rest in the Paradise of the sainted dead. But shall her buried body rise again? Nature scarcely hints it. The glory of spring following the death of winter, light taking the sceptre of darkness, the insect rising all beautiful from the

chrysalis, and floral loveliness from the bulb, offer but poor and faulty analogies.

Not a solitary soul re-enters our world to tell us plainly of a resurrection. No lingering spirits whisper around the mouldering relics, that they keep guard, waiting for the trumpet's call. But, thank God, our restless anxiety is calmed by the words of highest authority: "All that are in their graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth."

The love we bear our own bodies and those of our friends,—so instinctively shown in the care we give them, in the affectionate kiss we leave on the brow of the dead, in the flowers we strew on their graves and in the monuments we raise to their memory,—is proof that the numberless dead shall awake at the call of the Conqueror of death. The strong hope of seeing dear familiar faces again "in the sweet by-and-by," is not a God-given tantalization. It was not superstition that compelled the soldier to ask for his hand that had been shot off, and to address it: "Dear right hand, you have done me good service, and I must now bid you good-bye, but I shall see you again."

All the parts and particles which are necessary to the identity and integrity of the body in its once

normal and best condition, will come forth. All abnormal appendages that have been induced by disease and age, will be left behind. This fact and the glorification of the whole normal body inspire the sublime, victorious pean: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

The supreme climax of redemption will be the resurrection of the body; and until that wonderful emancipation day shall come, we may be blessed with the welcome truth that:

"Man, though dead, retains
Part of himself, the immortal mind remains.
The form subsists without the body's aid."

But again we are amid the solemnities of a funeral. The tenderest, dearest ties of hearts are broken, and the loved and loving wife is mourned; the true and devoted mother is wept for; the kind and affectionate sister is tenderly lamented; the friend of the needy and sorrowful is gratefully bemoaned; and a generous supporter of the church of Christ is affectionately and tearfully remembered. There are funerals at which bitterer tears are shed than we can shed to-day, and our grief is not the grief of agony.

It is neither the setting bud of infancy full of possible fragrance, bloom and fruit that has been nipped by the fatal frost, nor is it the well begun fruit of womanhood blasted before maturity; but it is the ripe fruit of Christian womanhood, perfected and gathered by the divine husbandman into the eternal garner of heavenly felicity. I know of no greater eulogy, than to say that there has not been a day, through all her long life, that human friends or angels would ask to hide with the charitable mantle of forgetfulness.

Her early life did not scar her soul and mar the character so that her later life must needs efface the scars and redeem the character. The light of early Christian experience has shed its increasing glory along the entire pathway of her life; and, like a wearied traveler, without guilt or wrong, she has laid down to rest. The wheels of life turned slowly and wearily, after passing the seventieth milestone; and the strength which carried them beyond, has been the strength of weakness. Even you, dear friends, the nearest of kin to the deceased, as you think of the helplessness of that weakness, of the restless tossings of the wearied, aching body, can not wish her recalled to pass through the long-drawn

agony again. No; for I am sure you would rather think of her as being in the enrapturing presence of Him whose precious name her countless expressions of confidence, praise and adoration have so highly magnified.

When the painful experiences of these last months shall be forgotten, or so faded that they will seem but a faintly remembered dream, then shall the strength, beauty and influence of her former self impress you with her loss. Although in the coming silence of the home you will wish for the genial companionship, enlivening cheerfulness, commanding presence, motherly advice and domestic supervision, and will deeply miss the smile, the voice, the presence and prayer of her whose blessed memory will ever be cherished with pleasure and gratitude by her many friends,—yet, even with the shadows where the loved one once blessed you, I know that murmuring will have no place, and, alone with your God, you will not complain.

I would not wound the tender sensitiveness of these bereaved hearts by fulsome praises of the deceased; but an honest voicing of public sentiment may be justly expected of me to-day, for I speak for the many. Some would have me say: “Mrs.

Smith was a woman who never had an enemy in the world, but was beloved by all who knew her." Others, that "she was a most excellent and estimable lady." Some speak of her uniform urbanity of manners to all classes of people; and others, "that the poor have lost a great friend in her death." Some have not known from whence their blessings came, until sickness paralyzed the hand that started them; and others may suffer because that hand is shut forever. Some would say that her door of affluence was never closed against a needy suppliant for alms; and others, that her warm, generous sympathies were with those who came to her in troubles. Some have regarded it the highest mead of praise to say that "she was the same kind-hearted, unostentatious woman after advancing to wealth as before;" and others have remarked that "they enjoyed to have such people become rich." Some would have me speak of her conservative love for old friends, old localities, old associations and ways; but others know also that her love for the old did not hinder her progressive attachment to new friends and associations. We know she was one of the guardian angels of *old* Asbury Church. Both tabernacles have been taken down nearly together; but

she longed to see the inside of the beautiful *new* Chapel and Church, and wept that she could not. At her own request, we bury her to-day from these hallowed walls, which, in silent eloquence, speak gratefully of the faithful dead who generously helped to rear them. You, my friends, who are enriched with the blessings of the most fortunate daughter* of "Old Asbury Chapel," when you look upon the face of our deceased sister in Christ, think, O think how much you are indebted to her for your own beautiful edifice. And we who steadily worship here may well think the same regarding our own. Those now speechless lips once bade me carry a message to this Church, and it was: "Tell the Church I love them, I love them." Yes, it was with a sympathizing, benevolent affection which awoke sleeping Asbury to a prosperous life. I do not, and you will not, forget another, of whom still more grateful words may well be spoken sometime in this same sanctuary of God.

During the last year of her life, our loved one has suffered much, and often longed for the rest of Paradise. In the "Land of Beulah," quite on the verge of heaven, she has been waiting with bright hopes and

* Trinity Church, Springfield.

sweetest confidence for the Master's call. During her sickness she has repeated many beautiful verses of hymns, greatly to her comfort, and what wonder, if amid severe bodily sufferings she would prayerfully repeat:

“When shall I reach that happy place,
And be forever blest;
When shall I see my Father's face,
And in His bosom rest?”

Speaking about the fact of her first entering the gates of heaven, she said: “I believe I shall shout, glory!” Last Sunday she raised her hands and exclaimed: “Glory! glory!”

Monday she looked up into my face through dimming eyes, and smiled a recognition. It was the last of her many benedictions upon her pastor. He has often been in her sick-room, for the pleasure and profit seemed mutual. In the language of a friend who has known her for many years I say, “I always felt it did me good to be in her presence.” At the same time, Monday, I asked her, “Is Jesus your refuge to-day?” Then came the hearty, emphatic answer: “Oh yes! I guess He is.” The tone of the reply made the words strong and sublime. Again

I asked: "Do you feel that all is well?" There was no answer—no apparent consciousness; but after I had left the room, she opened her eyes as if expecting to see me and give the answer. Then,—as if she had been thinking of the words: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thy rod and thy staff they comfort me,"—she whispered, "It is a great comfort."

I forbear to speak of the many tender scenes and incidents which belong exclusively to the knowledge and endearing memories of the bereaved household and relatives. But there are facts in her religious experience which belong to the Church and world, for the glory of God and to the praise of his truth. The clear, positive testimony to the very hour of her conversion to God; the assurance of the witness of the Spirit thereto; the tenacious clinging to the blessed Saviour, through a long pilgrimage of a half-century; the joyful trusting in "Jesus the Lover of her soul" during all her sickness; the exalted estimation of the priceless worth of religion, in comparison with which she said her friends and wealth were as nothing;—these are arguments for the divinity of Christ and the preciousness of his salvation, which all the wisdom and hostility of

infidelity and rationalism can not "gainsay or resist."

Countless choice expressions have almost involuntarily fallen from her godly lips, and they are "more precious than fine gold." Scarcely a day for months but what a part of a certain hymn has been sung or repeated to her. The blessed words always calmed and comforted her. They were :

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
 Let me to thy bosom fly,
 While the nearer waters roll,
 While the tempest still is high;
 Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
 'Till the storm of life is past;
 Safe into the haven guide,
 O receive my soul at last.

Other refuge have I none,
 Hangs my helpless soul on Thee;
 Leave, O leave me not alone,
 Still support and comfort me.
 All my trust on Thee is stayed;
 All my help from Thee I bring;
 Cover my defenceless head
 With the shadow of Thy wing."

Her long voyage is now ended. Not like many, who, crossing the waters of time, are lost in the fogs of doubt and irreligion, and cry for help on the breakers of despair which lie along the shores of eternity; but this Christian voyager, trusting her all to the Divine Pilot of Galilee, was triumphantly borne through the mists and breakers to celestial moorings amid the welcomes of greeting friends; and there, engaged in service peculiar to that healthful shore, our loved one is waiting for us. One by one we go from earth's tender relations, and those who go are more to be envied than those remaining. "To die is gain." Heaven's countless hosts echo the truth. Our faith re-echoes it. Burdens will not always load us down. The discharge comes 'when we are most weary. The transit is easy and quick. Our Father's House is not far off. Senator Foote, when dying, with radiant face and uplifted hands exclaimed: "I see it, I see it. The gates are open wide. Beautiful! beautiful!" and entered them forever.

Our dear sister is the first member of this Church that I have been called to bury. It will be with reluctant sadness that I shall write the word *dead* opposite *her* name so long honoring

the Church roll. Her benevolence, kindness and worth of character will be gratefully remembered by this Church, and by a large circle of friends without. I see a small circle of near relatives and old acquaintances. The center of that circle is in this coffin. She was like a mother to you all. It seems to you like the sun dropping out of the solar system and the planets scattering. You will possibly come to order again in heaven. O let no ear be deaf to her death-bed appeals, for they mean pardon on earth and peace and reunion in glory.

My dear brother Smith, as I think of your unostentatious devotion to the Christ I preach, and of your sympathy and kindness to me when shadows were deepening about my path, my grateful heart would fain repay with words of tenderest sympathy and consolation—words that are more than human, and meant for all hearts and for all sorrows. Yes, they are good angels to live in our trusting souls:

“Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

“Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

“For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

